

CHRISTIANITY AND PROPERTY
AN INTERPRETATION



BY ALBERT E. WAFFLE

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AN INTERPRETATION

BY

ALBERT E. WAFFLE

Author of "The Lord's Day" (\$1,000 Prize Essay), "The Interpreter with His Bible," etc.



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PREFATORY NOTE

THE purpose of this essay is to state and interpret the teaching of Christ and the Holy Spirit on the subject of property. The omission of all discussion of what has been written by uninspired men on economics, labor and capital, socialism, and kindred topics, has not been on account of entire ignorance of it, but because I have chosen to go directly to the fountain-head of truth and wisdom. What Christ and the Spirit say is final and authoritative. Our task and our privilege is to understand and to obey.

I consecrate this little work to the Lord Jesus, "whose I am and whom I serve." I pray that it may help to exalt his name and extend his kingdom among men.

A. E. W.

ALBION, N. Y., January, 1897.

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CHRISTIANITY AND PROPERTY

CHAPTER I

THE DIVINE WORD

LAY not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal : but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal : for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also (Matt. 6 : 19-21).

Sell that ye have and give alms ; make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth near, neither moth destroyeth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Luke 12 : 33, 34).

Be ye free from the love of money ; content with such things as ye have : for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee (Heb. 13 : 5).

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after : but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things (Luke 12 : 29, 30).

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived : neither . . . thieves, nor covetous, . . nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6 : 9, 10).

Let him that stole steal no more : but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need (Eph. 4 : 28).

And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham (Luke 19 : 8, 9).

He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath food, let him do likewise (Luke 3 : 11).

And all that believed were together and had all things common ; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all according as any man had need (Acts 2 : 44, 45).

But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Tim. 6 : 9-11).

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men but unto God (Acts 5 : 1-4).

Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying

up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed (1 Tim. 6 : 17-19).

In all things I give you an example, how that so labouring we ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20 : 35).

Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived delicately on the earth and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter (James 5 : 1-5).

For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what should a man give in exchange for his life? (Mark 8 : 36.)

But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6 : 33).

And one out of the multitude said unto him,

Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God (Luke 12 : 13-21).

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on (Matt. 6 : 24, 25).

And he lifted up his eyes . . . and said, Blessed

are ye poor : for yours is the kingdom of God. . . But woe unto you that are rich ! for ye have received your consolation (Luke 6 : 20, 24).

And behold, one came and said, Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life ? And he said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning that which is good ? One there is who is good : but if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, which ? And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother : and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I observed : what lack I yet ? Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me. But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful : for he was one that had great possessions. And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And when the disciples heard it they were astonished exceedingly, saying, Who then can be saved ? And

Jesus looking upon them said to them, With men this is impossible ; but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19 : 16-26 ; Mark 10 : 17-27 ; Luke 18 : 18-27).

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek ; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matt. 6 : 31, 32).

But godliness with contentment is great gain : for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out ; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content (1 Tim. 6 : 6-8).

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, the which is idolatry (Col. 3 : 5).

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away (Matt. 5 : 42).

And I say unto you, Make to yourself friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles. He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much : and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If there-

fore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? (Luke 16 : 9-12.)

Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day : and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table ; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom : and the rich man also died. . . And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom (Luke 16 : 19-23).

Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom (Luke 6 : 38).

Freely ye received, freely give (Matt. 10 : 8).

But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue ; but in deed and truth (1 John 3 : 17, 18).

But to do good and to communicate forget not :

for with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Heb. 13 : 16).

And he sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury : and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they which are casting into the treasury : for they all did cast in of their superfluity ; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living (Mark 12 : 41-44).

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come (1 Cor. 16 : 1, 2).

Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world : which came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea : which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11 : 27-30).

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia ; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For according to their power, I bear witness, yea, and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints : and this not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God. Insomuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also. But as ye abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich. And herein I give my judgment: for this is expedient for you, who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to do but also to will. But now complete the doing also ; that as there was the readiness to will, so there may be the completion also out of your

ability. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not. For I say not this that others may be eased, and ye distressed: but by equality your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, . . . that there may be equality: as it is written, He that gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack.

But thanks be to God, which putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For indeed he accepted our exhortation; but being himself very earnest, he went forth unto you of his own accord. And we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches; and not only so, but who was also appointed by the churches to travel with us in the matter of this grace, which is ministered by us to the glory of the Lord, and to show our readiness: avoiding this, that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us: for we take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have many times proved earnest in many things, but now much more earnest, by reason of the great confidence which he hath in you. Whether any inquire about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker to

you-ward ; or our brethren, they are the messengers of the churches, they are the glory of Christ. Show ye therefore unto them in the face of the churches the proof of your love, and of our glorying on your behalf.

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you : for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past ; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them. But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect ; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared : lest by any means, if there come with me any of Macedonia, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence. I thought it necessary therefore to intreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly ; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart ; not grudgingly, or of necessity : for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound unto you ; that ye having always all suffi-

ciency in everything, may abound unto every good work: as it is written, He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness abideth forever. And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God. For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God; seeing that through the proving of you by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution unto them and unto all; while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift (2 Cor. chap. 8, 9).

Howbeit ye did well, that ye had fellowship with my affliction. And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need. Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that in-

creaseth to your account. But I have all things and abound : I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God (Phil. 4 : 14-18).

CHAPTER II

ACQUISITION

CAN a faithful and obedient disciple of Jesus Christ acquire property? Some of his words on the subject seem plainly and emphatically to prohibit acquisition. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth." "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink." "Sell that ye have, and give alms." The Holy Spirit said to the Hebrew Christians, "Be ye free from the love of money ; content with such things as ye have." If the word of Jesus is final, must we not forego absolutely the acquisition and possession of property? So we shall conclude if we isolate his commands, and give them a literal interpretation. Does not his example compel us to deduce this rule of life from his teachings? He never acquired any property. After he ceased to be wholly dependent upon his parents, he earned his daily bread by the labor of his hands, until his public ministry began ; then he was dependent upon the gifts of friends. He said of himself, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." He owned no money, houses, lands, nor any earthly treasure. If

we follow him, must we be, in like manner, without possessions? Many have thus interpreted his words and example. In other days those who were resolved to follow Jesus closely took a vow of perpetual poverty. In our day Christian socialists are telling us that no Christian can rightly hold property in his own name.

Before we attempt to settle the question we should see clearly where such an interpretation will land us. If these commands of Christ are to be taken literally, his disciples can neither acquire nor hold anything. It is not a question of little or much. Under this law the capitalist has just as much right to own a whole county or a trunk-line of railroad, as a workingman has to own his little house and lot or the furniture of his home. Jesus does not say, "Lay not up for yourselves" great "treasure." To whom does he say, "Sell that ye have and give alms"? Only to the rich? It does not so read. If it is argued that he must have meant those with large possessions, who shall fix the limit? If a Christian may own anything at all, how much may he own? With this question open, to be settled by human teachers, we should have hopeless confusion, endless discord, bitter acrimony. Christ gave us no such insoluble problem.

If these prohibitions are to be taken literally, there are three possible methods of application.

The first is that all Christians should live in perpetual poverty. Earning what they can day by day, they will use what may be necessary to supply their daily wants, and give away the remainder.

There are at least two objections to this which make us question whether our Lord meant it to be the rule of life for his followers. One is that it would shut out Christians from all those kinds of business in which capital is required, and keep them all in the ranks of the wage-earners. It would make them dependent upon worldlings and unbelievers, and in a position to be oppressed by them. And if all the world should become Christian, no one could have any capital, and progress would be at an end. Another objection to the rule of perpetual poverty is that it would keep out of the hands of Christians an important instrument of power. Christians should control the money of the world so far as possible, that it may be used to extend the Kingdom of Christ and promote the happiness of mankind.

A second possible method of applying Christ's commands on this subject, if they are to be taken literally, is that individual ownership should be prohibited and that the State should own all property. A single objection to this is enough to show that Christ never proposed such a plan. It is that the property created by the labor and skill of

Christians would be controlled by an unchristian State, at least until Christians were in the majority. "What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?" "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." No Christian could live under such an arrangement and be loyal to his Lord. It would be equivalent to dethroning Christ and elevating an impersonal State to his place. Nationalism is far from being a Christian idea.

A third possible application is that Christians shall own in common what property they acquire. This plan has been a favorite one with many of the disciples of Christ, and seems to have warrant in the course of the first church at Jerusalem while it was acting under immediate apostolic direction. The advantages and difficulties of this method of life will be considered when we come to the subject of distribution. Just here it is enough to say that if Christ absolutely prohibited any acquisition of property by his followers, Christian communism is only an apparent not a real obedience to the command. It does not matter whether one Christian working alone or ten Christians working together accumulate property, they are both wrong if all accumulation is forbidden. Furthermore, it is not apparent that Christ ever ordained communism for his followers, or prescribed it as a remedy for greed and worldliness.

What, then, did Christ mean? He gave no unwise or impracticable commands. We have no temptation to explain away his words ; we only need rightly to understand them.

First of all we should consider the circumstances in which they were spoken. The Jews of the time of our Lord were a covetous, money-loving people. Generation after generation of them had inherited and cherished the belief that worldly prosperity was a sign of Divine approval. In their view the rich were Heaven's favorites. To such a people it was necessary that Jesus should use strong language on the subject. Those who were rich needed to be shocked out of their complacency and self-conceit, and the poor needed encouragement. Hence he said, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." "It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." He did not mean that all the poor are saved and all the rich lost, but by these hyperbolical statements taught that so far as his kingdom is concerned the advantages are with the poor. In the same manner we are to interpret the apparent prohibitions against the accumulation and ownership of property.

It was his custom to use these hyperbolical expressions. He said, "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own

life also, he cannot be my disciple." No one ever supposed that Jesus meant by this to teach that it is the duty of Christians to hate their kindred. It is an emphatic way of saying that his followers must be prepared to renounce their kindred if it becomes necessary in order to be loyal to him. Again he said, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors." It would be absurd to interpret this as an absolute prohibition of all social and practical gatherings by Christians with their kindred and equals. They are simply forbidden to do it to the exclusion of the poor and helpless from their bounty, and because they desire a return of the favor. He said to the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." Does he mean that both those places will become unfit or impossible places of worship? Nothing of the sort; he means that neither must be regarded as a superior or exclusive place of worship, on the ground that a spiritual God can be worshiped in spirit and in truth at any place.

These examples are sufficient to show that such strong, hyperbolical statements were not unusual in our Lord's teaching. A fair consideration of the circumstances and of his teaching as a whole

will enable us correctly to interpret such passages. When he says, "Treasure not for yourselves treasures upon the earth," we understand him to forbid his disciples to set their hearts on earthly riches to the neglect of higher interests. Rather than do that, "Sell that ye have and give alms." Be generous in giving rather than greedy in accumulating. And when he says, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink," he certainly does not mean to encourage idleness and vagabondage. If we do not work for ourselves others will be burdened with our support. Those who interpreted these commands literally and became "mendicant monks" and "begging friars" lost the spirit of our Lord's teaching in following the letter, and perverted it to sanction a course of life that was essentially criminal. The connection shows plainly that our Lord's purpose was to forbid worldly anxiety and encourage trust in the heavenly Father. "For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." And when the Holy Spirit said, "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have," he does not forbid accumulation. To be content with what we have is not inconsistent with strenuous effort to gain more. A discontented and complaining spirit is wrong, no matter how small may be our worldly

success; but one need not have that in order to acquire property.

But can one accumulate who is "free from the love of money"? That depends upon the motive and purpose of his effort. If he strives to gain money that he may gratify self, he is not free from the love of it; if he desires it simply as an instrument for good, he may use every legitimate means to acquire it and still have no sinful love for it. When the teaching of the New Testament is rightly understood, we find nothing in it to prohibit the acquisition of property.

But there is a worldly and there is a Christian way of acquiring it. What is the Christian way? The teaching of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit gives us a clear and simple answer to that interesting and important question. From this teaching we deduce easily two rules :

First, the Christian must not seek to acquire property in such a spirit or in such a manner as to violate the law of love.

Secondly, he must not sacrifice his own higher interests in order to acquire it.

Any student of Christianity is impressed with the fact that its primary law is love. Said Jesus, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The example of Jesus empha-

sizes his instruction. He gave his whole life with all its powers to the service of others in the spirit of love. This law is fundamental. All the teaching of Jesus is to be interpreted in the light of this law. We may be sure that he never gave warrant for any course of conduct that would be in violation of it. The law of love requires that we shall abstain from everything that is injurious to others, and do all we can that is beneficial. Thus it is both negative and positive.

In the acquisition of property there is danger that we shall violate the negative side of it and do injury to others. A common method of violating it is that of oppression and fraud on the part of employers. The terrible indictment against the rich which we have quoted from James is based on the statement made directly to them: "Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." This opens before us the whole question of work and wages. It is the great social problem of the day. It has led to boundless discussion and to the great war between labor and capital. We cannot enter into the details of the discussion at the present time.

This problem gives rise to many difficult questions. Shall labor be considered a commodity to

be bought by the highest bidder? What are fair wages for any given kind of employment? What share of the increment justly belongs to capital? Ought brain work to receive larger pay than manual toil? It may never be possible to answer these questions satisfactorily to all concerned; but one thing is clear, an employer who does not pay fair wages to his employees, and pay it as promptly as possible, is not a disciple of Christ. He is a worshiper of Mammon, and not a worshiper of God. His greed for gain has made him violate the first law of Christianity—the law of love. Under the law of Christ we may acquire property; but not at the expense of those who work for us.

Again, those who seek to acquire property are tempted to violate the law of love by fraud. All deceit, or over-reaching, or cheating, or robbery of another, is a violation of this law. If we take anything from another without returning what is to him a fair equivalent, it is certain that we do not love him as ourselves. We know how common these things are in the business world; but they can have no place in the conduct of Christians. They are directly prohibited. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither . . . thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of

God." The principal reason for condemning such practices is that they are in direct violation of the law of love.

The greed for gain often leads men to inflict positive injury upon others. Lovers of money are not lovers of their kind, but are indifferent to their welfare, or treat them with heartless cruelty. Men have kidnapped and sold their fellow-men into slavery for the sake of gain. Landlords extort exorbitant rents from their tenants, and refuse to give them any corresponding advantages. Manufacturers and mining companies fail to provide for the comfort, health, and safety of their employees, because such provision will cost money. They would rather sacrifice men than money; would rather shed blood than yield booty. Foods and medicines are adulterated regardless of any consequences except the profits of the adulterant. Rich men combine to put up the price of the necessities of life, not caring who may suffer if they can make themselves richer. Men manufacture and sell that which they know is destructive of soul and body, being willing indirectly to murder their fellow-men and send them to perdition for the sake of money. These are a few of the crimes into which men are led when they love money more than they love God and humanity. It is needless to say that no disciple of Christ can acquire property by processes or

methods which involve such treatment of others. If he derives revenue from any source that is injurious to others, the Christian must abandon it or be disloyal to his Lord.

It is a very common mistake to suppose that sins of this kind are mostly committed by the rich. Careful observation will show that the poor are equally guilty. A large majority of employees try to give as little service as possible for their wages. They will take advantage of every opportunity to shirk or slight their work. I once asked a kind-hearted, just man, who had been an employer of skilled and unskilled workmen for forty years, what proportion of men could be trusted to do a fair day's work when they were not watched. His answer was, "about one in five." On that estimate, four-fifths of the wage-earners are rogues who are trying to get something for nothing. Whatever the right proportion may be, it is certain that, in the conflict between labor and capital, the robbery is not all on one side. Withholding service that is due is just as bad as withholding wages that are earned.

The Christian law of love requires in business that employers shall pay fair wages to those who work for them, and have due regard for their physical, mental, and moral welfare; that in every trade a fair equivalent shall be given; that only

pure goods shall be made and sold, and only honest weights and measures used ; that landlords shall exact only fair rents for farms and houses and rooms ; that no business shall be engaged in that is injurious to others ; that money-lenders shall not exact usury from the unfortunate ; that wage-earners shall give an honest day's work for a just day's wages ; in a word, that every one shall regard the rights and interests of others. It is sometimes claimed by business men that the observance of this law would preclude all possibility of worldly success. They say that no man can acquire property under such rules as these. If that is true, men must take their choice between Christ and property, between eternal life and worldly good. There is no other alternative. It is impossible to be a disciple of Christ and at the same time deliberately violate this law of love. "Ye cannot worship God and mammon." Men may be hypocrites, they may deceive themselves, or they may have a kind of Sunday faith that does not affect the life, but the alternative is not thus evaded. Suppose it is true that one cannot get rich and obey the law of love ; what of it ? Thousands of the disciples of Christ have lived in conditions in which lifelong and extreme poverty was part of the price of discipleship, and yet have followed him and been loyal to the end. What they have

done others can do. But in this country, at least, such conditions do not exist. Here men of ability, of skill, of enterprise, of energy, and of industry, may acquire property and still keep the Christian law of love. Our boundless natural resources, our mechanical inventions, our just laws, and our general admiration of honorable methods, make this possible. Perhaps a true Christian cannot make so much money as a worldling of equal capacity and enterprise, but he can make enough. At any rate, if he would follow Jesus he must obey the law of love. If he has the spirit of Christ he will set little value upon worldly good. He will hold it in contempt except as it may minister to the welfare of his fellow-men. It is inconceivable that any one in whose heart Christ is dwelling should be greedy for gain as a good in itself.

Secondly, the Christian must not sacrifice his own higher interests in order to acquire money. One fact emphasized by Christ and by the Holy Spirit is that it is dangerous to seek or to possess wealth. Jesus said, "Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Holy Spirit said: "But they that desire to be

rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil : which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things ; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." There are dangers both in acquiring and possessing wealth, but in this part of the discussion we have to do only with the former. They are described with great force in these words of Paul to Timothy. Those who seek to gain wealth are tempted to dishonesty. Entering into fierce competition with others engaged in the same pursuit, and finding that the others do not scruple at trickery, they try to justify themselves in the same practices. The temptation to deceit, fraud, over-reaching, and oppression, is too strong for them and they fall. Of course this means the destruction of character. They injure others in property, but the chief injury is to their own souls. While they rob others they murder themselves. Every violation of the law of love injures the violator more than it does any one else. And so it is the way of the world for men to sell their souls for money. The apostle seems to teach that those who have confessed Christ are not free

from these dangers. They are very real and imminent dangers, and all men are warned against them. Under the Christian law one must not acquire money at the expense of his character. He must not barter his soul for worldly gain.

Another danger is that the seeker after money will become avaricious. Beginning his pursuit with good motives a change is likely to take place in his spirit. At first his real purpose may be to acquire wealth in order to do good with it. But the fascinating pursuit is likely to change such a one into a selfish money-seeker. He sees so many ways in which money can be made to minister to his selfish desires that his benevolent purpose evaporates, and almost unconsciously he becomes a worshiper of mammon. The generous and noble purposes of youth are often thus subtly destroyed by the man's greed for gain. There is always danger that the road to wealth will lead one to that covetousness which surely shuts him out from the kingdom of heaven. We may mention a single illustration of this danger. Many a young man has said that he would become a Christian after he had acquired a certain amount of property, and really meant it, only to find that before the stated goal was reached all desire for spiritual good had been smothered by "the deceitfulness of riches."

Another serious danger to them that "desire to

be rich " is that they will become absorbed in the pursuit of money to the neglect of all higher interests. They are likely to have no standard of value but the money value. They are so afraid their bodies will not be cared for that they forget all about their souls. They would rather make money than cultivate love. They are so busy raking up sticks and straws that they cannot see the golden crown just above their heads. Against this danger Jesus uttered the most solemn warnings. "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." A man who was thus absorbed in the pursuit of worldly good once came to Jesus and said, "Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." He was so full of the love of money that he could bring to the Divine Teacher no nobler request than that. When he might have had eternal life and divine truth from him, he was only able to ask the Lord to aid him in money-getting. And there is many a man who, if he were to pray at all, could think of nothing higher to ask the Lord than that he would make him rich. No wonder Jesus said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider

over you," utterly refusing to arbitrate in any such matter. And then he went on to give the parable of the rich fool who was condemned because he was so satisfied with his worldly goods that he forgot all about God and eternity and his own soul. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God." It is very difficult to get rich toward God and rich in this world's goods at the same time. The former means rich in faith and love and hope, and certainly one cannot be rich in these graces when he is absorbed in the pursuit of worldly gain. Jesus does not say that the two kinds of riches are absolutely exclusive of each other; but in many cases they are. And when they are, he says that the man is a fool who chooses the earthly riches in preference to the heavenly.

It is commonly supposed that these dangers beset only those who are successful in the pursuit of wealth. But that is a great mistake. The possession of wealth has its peculiar dangers; but in the matter of acquisition the dangers of the unsuccessful are greater than those of the successful. If a man has his heart set on worldly goods it does not matter whether he gains little or much so long as his desire remains the same. There is probably as much greed for gain among the poor as among the rich, and as much lying, trickery, and fraud to gratify it. Sympathy for the man who fails in his

efforts often blinds us to the character of his purposes. If people are very poor they are apt to become completely absorbed in the struggle for bread and to forget both God and heaven. The prohibitions which Jesus uttered against anxiety about food and clothing, and especially for the morrow, must have been addressed to the poor. They are as likely to distrust God as the rich are to forget him. Their failure to gain wealth when they have set their hearts on it is apt to make them sour and discontented. Contentment with what we have is as much a Christian virtue as liberality in the use of wealth. "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have." It is undeniable that the poor are often not only discontented, but envious, jealous, and spiteful toward the rich. We are prone to excuse such feelings on the ground that the conduct of the rich partly justifies them; nevertheless, they are directly contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. The man who indulges them must pluck "the beam" out of his own eye before he can see clearly to pluck "the mote" out of his rich brother's eye.

Another great danger to the Christian who is seeking to acquire wealth is that he will become an idler in the vineyard of our Lord. He will excuse himself from active service on the ground that his "business" absorbs his time and strength. On

this point I wish to be fair and discriminating. Undoubtedly the Master sets some of his servants making money and others preaching the gospel. All have not the same gifts and all are not called to the same work. The Christian who is making money for the Master's use is not to be criticised because he is not spending his time and strength directly in religious work. He may be as pure in his motives, as complete in his devotion, as the most consecrated preacher. Nevertheless, it remains true that no man can be wholly excused from personal service in the Lord's kingdom. When men are so busy in making money that they have no time for family worship, or for the instruction of their children in godliness, or for the prayer meeting of their church, or for the management of the affairs of the church, or for personal work in winning souls, they are sacrificing higher interests to lower, and violating Christ's law. They cannot justify themselves nor correct the error by saying that they intend to use their money in extending Christ's kingdom. Some personal service is required and a substitute will not be accepted. One who refuses to do such personal work on the ground that his money-making hinders, robs himself of a great advantage. No one can grow as a Christian who is wholly absorbed in making money, even though he is making it for Christian

purposes. The first business of a Christian is to grow into the likeness of Christ.

It is simply a truism to say that the soul is worth more than the body, that the spiritual is more valuable than the material, that eternal things are more important than temporal. It is impossible to deny it in the face of our Lord's example and instruction. The most superficial student of his life is impressed by the fact that he cared nothing for wealth. This contempt sprang mainly from the fact that there are other things of so much greater value. He would have his disciples set their hearts on these greater things. They are to "lay up treasures in heaven." They should acquire the "true riches." They must seek to get "rich toward God," if they would avoid the charge of being fools. They are to "flee" the dangers of trying to get rich and "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

The teaching is sufficiently explicit. No one can misunderstand its meaning. The follower of Christ may acquire property, but he may not do it in such a way or to such an extent as to violate the law of love, which is fundamental and primary in the kingdom of God. He must not fail in love to his neighbor for the sake of gain. The obligation to love himself is equally imperative; hence, he must not love money more than his own higher in-

terests. Having received the word, he must not allow "the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches" to "choke the word" so that it "becometh unfruitful." Other things are worth more than money, and the law of Christ is that we are to seek for ourselves the best that can be had. He who can starve his own soul and impoverish heaven for sake of worldly good has failed to learn the primary lesson of our Lord's instruction.

CHAPTER III

CONSECRATION

THIS word is much used by those who have little apprehension of its meaning. Primarily, it means the act of making sacred, or of devoting to a holy use. Devoting ourselves to God to be used according to his will is consecration. It is a practical recognition of his ownership. It is the act of surrendering ourselves to him. It is not a sentiment, a state of feeling, but a decision of the will followed by consistent acts. Many persons feel that they belong to God, and are very complacent over their religious attitude, who never practically consult his will with regard to anything. Such persons are not consecrated. It is hard to tell whether they are deceiving themselves or trying to deceive others. Consecration is not a profession. No doubt some persons make a profession of consecration ignorantly, not knowing what it involves, and some say that they consecrate themselves and then fail to do it; but real consecration is an act. It is an act as definite and specific and as easily understood as any other act—as *e. g.*, the act of marriage or the act of signing a deed. It is

not a matter of feeling or of knowledge, but solely a matter of the will.

It is the same act when it relates to property. When we consecrate our property to God we simply give it over to him to be used according to his will. It is a definite transaction. When we have consecrated it to God we have no further will concerning the use of it, any more than we have concerning the use of a farm which we have deeded to another. His will is then to control it. Our only responsibility lies in learning what that will is and doing it. We may simplify the matter still more. Consecration of property to God is simply applying the law of obedience to its use. "Obedience" is a more old-fashioned word than "consecration," but it means substantially the same thing. Perhaps it is not so popular in religious assemblies because it is more easily understood.

It should be impressed upon our minds at the outset that there can be no real consecration of ourselves to God which does not include the consecration of our property. To give ourselves to God and expect to retain the use of our property is a mere farce. Are we bound to consecrate our property to him? The question is answered in the definition of consecration. One cannot be a follower of Christ without obeying him. That obedience must be universal. We cannot say we are

obedient if in any department of life, or in reference to anything we control, we are putting our will against his. Neither can a follower of Christ disregard his will. Many persons mistakenly think they are not disobedient because they have never really asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We are bound to ask that question and to ask it in a spirit of submission. We have no occasion to deceive ourselves by confusing our minds with big words. A Christian is one who obeys Christ and obeys him in the use of his property as fully as in other things. Consecration of property then, is an essential part of following Christ. He must be allowed to direct in the use of that or the property holder is in rebellion against his Lord.

This might end the discussion. But since there are different ways of stating the same truth, we may consider some further reasons why we should consecrate our property.

1. It is the practical recognition of an evident fact. As Christians we belong to God by virtue of creation, redemption, and conquest. He created us. When one invents a thing and then fashions it out of material which is rightfully his, his creation belongs to him. He can maintain his right of possession against all comers. In that sense we belong to God. If any man is not serving God, he is like a runaway slave. He has stolen himself

from his rightful master. God has redeemed us in Christ Jesus. Having run away and sold ourselves to the adversary, he has bought us back. "And ye are not your own ; for ye were bought with a price ; glorify God therefore in your body." And it was in order that he might have a people to love, in whom to dwell, and whom he would sanctify and glorify, that he redeemed us. "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Among warlike peoples one way of acquiring property is to go forth with arms and conquer it. Christ came forth from heaven armed with love to conquer us. By his work for us and in us, he has made a loving conquest of our hearts. Thus the fact of Divine ownership has been established.

But if we belong to God, our property also belongs to him. The greater includes the less. A slave can own no property in his own right. Whatever he has belongs to his master. Our relation to God is more loving, tender, and sweet than that of a slave to his master. He is a father unto us and we are his children. But the ownership is just as absolute, and conscious enjoyment of the filial relation depends upon recognition of the ownership. We cannot know God as our father unless we know him as owner.

Although it has been my plan to limit this dis-

cussion to the teaching of the New Testament, I cannot refrain at this point from calling attention to the clearness with which the fact of Divine ownership was recognized even under the Old Dispensation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein," is an expression which, in varying forms, appears frequently in the Psalms. The most striking exhibition of this knowledge is to be found in the prayer of David at the time when the people brought in their offerings for the erection of the temple. Some of the statements in this prayer of dedication are: "All that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine." "Both riches and honor come of thee." And of the offerings he said, "Of thine own have we given thee." If we have seemed to take advanced ground in this matter of consecration, take notice that we are not one whit in advance of David. He recognized the fact that the Lord owned him and his property and this is all that we do in the act of consecration.

2. Consecration of our property to God is required by common honesty. We are stewards. What we have in our possession is God's property placed for a time in our hands to be used for him. This is the real meaning of the parables of the Pounds and the Talents. A master goes away for a season and leaves his business in the hands of his

servants. That they may carry on that business he entrusts them with a certain amount of money. The master in these parables represents our Lord, and the servants are his disciples. The pounds and talents may represent more than property or money, but they certainly include that. Another parable about stewards is concluded with these words: "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" According to this, money is the least of the things which God gives us. With money he tests our faithfulness to see whether we are fit to receive the eternal riches of the soul. Money is "that which is another's," the riches of the soul may be our own. Nothing could be plainer on the point of stewardship. It is uniformly assumed in the New Testament that our property all belongs to God. We are stewards. We are transacting business for another. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." The moment a steward begins to think of what he is using as being his own, the seeds of dishonesty are springing up in his heart. In spirit he has already begun to

rob his master. To maintain his honesty he must practically and continuously recognize the fact that he is a steward. He will avoid the temptation to steal only by keeping that ever before his mind.

But "will a man rob God?" "Yet ye have robbed me." "But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?" "In tithes and offering." But that is in the Old Testament; the teaching of the New is a distinct advance upon what is implied in that stern charge. In the New Testament it is assumed that not only "tithes and offerings" belong to God, but all that we have; and robbery consists in using as our own "that which is another's." If this relation of stewardship is real, we cannot be honest men and women unless we practically recognize God's ownership of all the property in our possession. If we are using it selfishly or in any way contrary to his will, we are thieves and robbers. We may not be conscious of the crime and may not like the hard names, but that does not alter the fact. Material possessions cannot remain long in our hands; only for a few years at most do we hold the office of steward. In death God will take us away from our property. Then the illusion of absolute possession will be dispelled. Then we shall be called upon "to give an account of our stewardship." Then it will appear to angels and to men whether or not we have been honest

stewards of that concerning which the Lord said to us, "Occupy till I come."

3. Consecration of our property will establish right relations with God. This thought has been partly expressed in the preceding paragraph, but it demands additional expansion. A person who does not consecrate his property must be in one of two wrong positions : Either he must ignore God, taking no account of his claims, holding his property as belonging to himself ; or he must be consciously defiant of God, deliberately robbing him, and having no intention of making restitution. There does not seem to be any middle ground for one holding unconsecrated property. Both positions are manifestly wrong. The only right relation to God is that in which we recognize his ownership of ourselves and of our property. If we ignore him, we are godless ; if we defy and rob him, we are rebels. It is only by consecration of ourselves and our property that we can have that fellowship with God which it is the design of redemption to establish. Take that wonderful passage in 2 Cor. 6 : 16-7 : 1, and see how plainly this is taught by the Spirit : "And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols ? for we are a temple of the living God ; even as God said, I will dwell in them and walk in them ; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from among them

and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The condition of fellowship with God, of having him dwell in us and walk with us, of knowing him as Father, is that we be "separate," marked-off, set apart for divine uses. It is impossible to pray without consecration of property. One who is holding his property away from God, either ignoring his claims or defying them, can observe scarcely any of the conditions of real and successful prayer. He cannot be filial, reverent, humble, obedient, submissive, or trustful. His disposition is directly the reverse of these qualities. That is an important reason why so many nominal Christians are practically prayerless. They come to feel that their prayers are vain forms and hence cease to pray. They lose faith in prayer when they have never offered a genuine prayer in their lives. This lack of consecration is the reason why so many apparent prayers are not answered. The attitude of the petitioner toward God is wholly wrong, though his petitions may be right, hence he does not obtain answers to his requests. In fact, nothing can be right

in our relations to God till our property is consecrated to his service.

4. This consecration will relieve the mind of care and anxiety. In respect to responsibility and care there is a great difference between one who does business for himself and one who is simply the agent of another. The latter, if he is a good steward, will not be careless or neglectful. But his chief concern will be to be faithful. If he can show his master that he has done the best he could he cares for nothing beyond. He will not be unduly anxious about results. If he obeys orders, the responsibility for success does not rest on him. Furthermore, a child employed by a parent never worries about his own support. Neither does a slave. It is the business of the master to provide that. This is just as true in our relations to God. If we are making money for him, if we have consecrated our property to him, we shall not be anxious about success nor worry about our support. But one who does business for his own advantage has these abiding and fruitful sources of anxiety. If he is greedy for gain he carries a load of care lest his ventures shall not turn out well. If they do not succeed he is anxious about his support and fearful that he will come to want. Here we touch the sources of most of the worry in the world. It is because we want things for ourselves that we are

anxious. If we could believe in the goodness and wisdom of God, and recognize the fact that we are his stewards, making money for him, and believe that he will provide for our wants as his servants, and give us whatever measure of success is for his glory and our good, we should be free from care about property. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time ; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you." It is common to quote the latter part of this text and ignore the rest. But it cannot be thus bisected without destroying its value. We cannot claim the promise unless we observe the condition. Humble yourselves to your true position as stewards, servants, slaves of God, and then you can trust him to care for you. Crucify your selfish desires, and be content to receive what he is willing to give, and then you can trust him to supply your wants. Carry on your business for the Lord and he will give you the right measure of success. It is only another way of saying, consecrate yourself and your property to God and he will take care of you. He will certainly care for his own ; he cannot care for that which is withheld from him. We should not expect him to deliver us from care until we put ourselves into his hands. Why should he keep in peace the distrustful and the disobedient ? Between

consecration of our property and the refusal to consecrate it there is all the difference between a life of strain and fret and worry and anxiety and a life of peace and contentment and restfulness. This is a case in which giving is gain and surrender is victory. Consecration is the cure for carking care.

5. It will greatly promote the development of the spiritual life. What is spirituality? Some of its elements are regard for the things of the spirit, a lively sense of God and eternity, a perception of spiritual laws and relations, and a habit of being led by the Holy Spirit. The cultivation of the spiritual life is the most important thing the Christian has to do. It is far more than the acquisition of property, or the development of the intellect, or the cultivation of social graces. Our spirituality is our fitness for heaven, the land of spirits. It is also the chief element of power for service in this world. It is that which gives us power with God in prayer, and power with men in presenting Christ.

It is thought by many that it is impossible for one engaged in money-making to have much spirituality. We know that as a matter of fact most men get absorbed in their business pursuits and give little attention to the things of the spirit. And they excuse their lack of spiritual development, when they are conscious of it, on the ground that it is not consistent with proper attention to

their business. But everything depends on whether we consecrate our property to God and conduct our business for him. If we ignore his claims or consciously rob him, it is inevitable that we shall be worldly and unspiritual. One in either position is virtually cut off from God. He thus destroys the means by which the spiritual life can be developed. He "lays up treasure for himself" and so cannot be "rich toward God." Our churches are full of spiritual dwarfs who have made themselves such by the worship of mammon.

But one who consecrates his property does not suffer this loss. In the cultivation of spirituality he is at no disadvantage because of his absorption in business. That act, if consistently maintained, brings God into his life, and the busy money-maker walks in daily fellowship with the Most High. His chance for growth in spirituality is then as good as that of the Christian minister. The shop, the factory, the store, the office, or the farm, then becomes as holy as a church. It is generally agreed that giving is a means of grace ; but that is really true only when it is that kind of giving which treats God as the owner of all that we possess. If we dole out to him small amounts with the understanding that we may use all the remainder as we please, we shall get no spiritual returns. That is no cure for the deadly, blighting worldliness to

which the selfish money-getter yields himself. The only kind of giving that promotes spirituality is that kind which begins with the giving of self and property and business and continuously reckons all as belonging to God. One who does that will grow in spirituality and in every element of Christian character. It is thus that we "make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness"; it is thus that we get "rich toward God." It is thus that a business life is made beautiful and divine.

6. Consecration is the only way to attain power for Christian service. God will use that which is devoted to him; he cannot use that which is withheld from him. The great reason why so many Christians have no power for service is that they are not consecrated. One reason why the money that goes into the Lord's treasury accomplishes so little for his cause in the world is that it is not consecrated money. It is not given to the Lord but to "the church," or to "missions," or to some other institution. The giving is in no sense a personal transaction with him. The money comes out of an unconsecrated fund. Hence the Lord does not accept and bless and use it. There is a beautiful lesson for us in this matter in the miracle of the loaves and fishes. There was the great, famishing multitude; there were the disciples, ordered to feed them, while they had nothing with which to do it;

there were the five loaves and two fishes, which they procured from the boy standing by. No wonder they said, "What are these among so many?" But in response to Jesus' order they brought them to him and the multitude was fed. Bring what you have to Jesus and get his blessing on it, and it will help to feed the hungry world. Money may thus be transmuted into spiritual power. Let it be offered in such a spirit that he can accept it, let it be the fruit of consecrated effort, let it come out of consecrated property, and you can be assured that it will promote the cause of Christ in the world.

These are some of the reasons why we ought to consecrate our property to God. It will put us into our proper place as stewards of God; it will give us right relations with him; it will relieve us of much care and give us rest and peace; it will promote our spirituality and increase our power for service. It will change money-getting from a base and worldly business to a divine calling. The spirit that moves us to this act will permeate every department of life and govern our every act. In this act of consecration our lives will be illumined and elevated by divine influences. All that is sordid and mean will go out of them, and we shall be able in some measure to reproduce the life of Christ on earth.

CHAPTER IV

DISTRIBUTION

THE consecration of property to God does not imply that it is all to be used for religious purposes. This is a mistake easily made by those who have been accustomed to divide life into the two departments of sacred and secular. The New Testament knows nothing of such a division, and to make it in thought and practice is thoroughly vicious in its effects upon Christian living. This misunderstanding of consecration prejudices many minds against it. Supposing that it means the devotion of all they have to religious purposes, they feel an inward protest against the demand as impracticable and even impossible. If such a demand were made, the protest would be just and proper; but that is as far as possible from being the case. While the teachings of the New Testament were opposed to selfish worldliness, they are not contrary to ordinary common sense. The consecration of our property to God simply means that it is to be used as he may direct. Surely no servant of God can object to that, for his will is just and right, and all his commands are given in

love. He will not order us to use our property in any way that is not for our own highest good. We can be sure that he will have regard for all the demands of our nature as well as for the demands of his kingdom in the world.

How shall we learn his will? Has it been so revealed that we can know it with regard to all the details of expenditure and of giving? There may be difficulties in answering these questions, but the task is not impossible. We can learn the will of God concerning the use of property if we really desire to know it. We have four sources of information :

1. The words of Christ, who spoke by authority, and the words of men, who wrote by the inspiration and impulse of the Holy Spirit. These words were meant to be understood, and can be. They were spoken and written for our guidance. They are the source of final authority for the disciples of Christ. When fairly interpreted and applied we must obey them or lose our right to be called Christians. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." As the main purpose of this chapter is to explain and apply the teachings of the New Testament on the distribution of

property, we pass on to notice other sources of information on the subject.

2. Fair inference from the general law of the Christian life enunciated by our Master. That law, as we have already seen, is the law of love. While we must not violate the law of love in the acquisition of property, we must exemplify that law in the distribution of property. Money must be used as an instrument of love. If a fair-minded disciple were in doubt as to the Christian use of any amount of money he might have to expend, he could ordinarily learn the will of Christ by asking what use of it love would prompt. For love is not a mere sentiment, it is a practical passion. "But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." Love will guide us where other light will fail. It will tell us when to give and when to withhold.

3. The example of Christ. All admit that he is our pattern. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." In our attempts at Christian living we should make much more of the example of Christ than we do. And yet, in trying to imitate him there is need of prudence and caution. Literal imitation is neither

possible nor desirable. If we attempt it in this matter, we shall be obliged to make a vow of perpetual poverty. In that case we shall have no property to distribute, or we shall distribute it as fast as we earn it. We have already shown that this is not the force of his example. No such slavish imitation is meant by the command to follow him.

The true way to get the force of his example is first to study carefully his life. Be sure that you apprehend the motive and spirit of that life. Separate the governing law of his life from its details and circumstances. Put away from your thought what was unique and peculiar in his mission. Then ask yourself what he would do in your place, in your circumstances, with your mission to fulfill, and do that thing. To come to our specific subject, what would Christ do if he were in the world now, if he lived in your city or town, or on your farm, and owned property? How would he use his money? If he were a business man, how would he use the profits of his business? if he were a laboring man, what would he do with his wages? Suppose him at the same time to be in your circumstances, obliged to support a family, or to educate children, or to provide simply for his own wants. If he had inherited property or acquired it in some other way, what would he do with the principal?

If he invested it, how would he use the income? An intelligent and obedient student of the life of Christ can so answer these questions as to get from his example safe rules for the use of consecrated property. They are natural and proper questions for a steward to ask. Christ owns all our property, and has told us to use it for him, saying, "Occupy till I come." We cannot be faithful stewards unless we ask with regard to every dollar of it, what would he do with it if he were here in our place? Thus only can we learn his mind with regard to the use of what belongs to him.

4. The leadings of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. The main office of the Spirit is to reveal Christ. He so illumines the example of Christ that we are able to understand it. At the same time he gives direct guidance. He dwells in us as the inner Enlightener and Teacher. He enables us to apply the general principles of the word to the details of action. "He shall teach you all things," Jesus promised. "He will guide you into all truth. Suppose one is in honest doubt as to what he shall do with a certain sum of money. It hardly seems possible if he has consulted the inspired word, the law of love, and the example of Christ; but he might be. Then let him pray; let him not take counsel of his own selfish heart, but let him inquire of God what his will is, and he will

be surely guided. If no specific direction is given, he will get new light on the general sources of information and know the mind of the Lord.

These four sources of information are abundant. Making the best use we can of them, let us try to interpret and apply the teaching of Christ and the Holy Spirit to the distribution of property. The subject falls naturally into five divisions.

1. *Communism*, or the equal distribution of all property. It is claimed by some interpreters that Christ and the inspired apostles were socialists and that their ideal of human society was a commune. It must be admitted that some precepts of our Lord seem to teach that doctrine. Take for examples of this kind his words, "Sell that ye have and give alms," and "give to him that asketh thee," and his instructions to the rich young ruler, "if thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me." If these commands are to be interpreted literally, and applied to all Christians, then no disciple of Christ can hold any property while others are in want, and one can never hold more than another. This position is strengthened by the example of Christ, by the fact that the Twelve had a common purse, and by the communism of the church at Jerusalem. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common ;

and they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, according as any man had need." This seems to be a literal carrying out of their Lord's precepts, and these Christians were apparently led by the Holy Spirit. Does their course of action make a law for all Christians? We are here face to face with a serious problem. In the attempt to solve it we must move cautiously and seek light from every quarter. We must try to discover the mind of the Master. If by word of mouth and through the Spirit he taught that communism is the divine law of human society, we must not dismiss it as a visionary and impracticable scheme, but must set ourselves to obeying his instruction.

Two things are to be noticed at the outset: First, that if Christ taught communism as the ideal of human society, it is an ideal which can be realized only in the church. He never intended that his followers should surrender their property to the wicked that the latter might squander it upon their vices or hoard it as an instrument of oppression. Even supposing that Christians have no rights, only duties, this would still be an absurd interpretation of his teaching. The law of love, which is central and fundamental in the Christian life, would forbid such a course.

Secondly, if Christ taught communism and the

early Christians practised it, it was wholly voluntary. It was not imposed upon the individual by the church. This is evident from what Peter said to Ananias with regard to his falsely represented gift : "Whiles it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?" That distribution of goods was not something which the church was requiring of its members. It is certain that Christ gave to no society—neither to Church nor State—authority to exact such a distribution from those who are members of it. Much less did he give to some individuals authority to impose this obligation upon others. It is flatly against the teaching of our Lord for one to insist upon communism in order that he may be a receiver of other people's goods.

If communism is taught in the New Testament it amounts simply to this, that the disciples of Christ who have property are to divide it with others who have less or none, until there is substantial equality. They may make this distribution directly, with their own hands, or they may put their property into a common fund to be distributed by officers of the church. Is that the doctrine of Christ? A fair interpretation of all he taught on the subject will show that it is not.

The words, "Sell that ye have and give alms," were spoken to the Twelve and were part of the

instruction which our Lord gave to prepare them for their special work as evangelists and missionaries. The command which the rich young ruler disobeyed was a test adapted to his particular case. Christ and the Twelve had a common purse, just as a company of travelers might have, for convenience in their peculiar circumstances ; but he never said or implied that this method of life must be adopted by persons living in settled homes and with families to support. The communism of the church at Jerusalem was purely voluntary, as we have shown, and must have grown out of something peculiar in its circumstances, since it was a practice which does not seem to have been adopted by any other apostolic church.

Jesus did not condemn private ownership. Neither he nor his apostles said one word against the right of Christian men to hold and use the property which they have gained by inheritance or by honest industry. Of course they hold it subject to his orders ; but their right stands against all human claimants. While he showed clearly and forcibly the dangers of wealth, he said nothing to indicate that its possession is inconsistent with true piety. The family of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, at Bethany, was wealthy but they had his loving friendship and his evident approval. He does not rebuke them for luxury nor command

them to surrender their wealth. He commended and accepted Zaccheus because he gave up half, not the whole, of his goods to feed the poor. According to all the traditions and the general belief, Nicodemus was a man of vast wealth; but Jesus said nothing to him about surrendering or distributing it. To him he discoursed of the new birth, the love of God, the atonement, and salvation by faith. Though we cannot establish a doctrine by the absence of utterances regarding it, it is fair to put several examples of this kind against that of the rich young ruler.

There are other considerations which should have weight in forming our opinion. Property is a trust placed in the hands of men by the Owner of all things. What right has one man to transfer that trust and its responsibility to another? When the master in the parable went away, he gave to one servant five talents, to another two, and to another one. Would it have been according to his will if they had immediately come together and made an equal distribution? Property is a trust which ought not to be transferred.

Again, the doctrines and precepts of the New Testament are adapted to human nature. While they are intended to change it, they nevertheless take account of its constitution. So long as men are naturally lazy and selfish, they need the spur

of want to make them industrious and enterprising. Let the average Christian suppose that he can, without shame to himself, draw on a common fund, and he has too great a temptation to idleness. To this it may be answered that the power of Christ can deliver from laziness and meanness, and that our system of the private ownership of property hinders his work by promoting pride and selfishness and worldliness. The objection has little force, because Christ does not make us perfect at once by a miracle of transformation, but leaves us in part to the discipline of Providence. Furthermore, the dangers of individual ownership are wholly overcome by the consecration of our property to God.

2. *Personal expenditure.* If the Christian has a right to control his own property, what shall he do with it? How shall he expend his income? Of course, he will not forget that he is a steward, and that he must seek orders from his Master. What is the will of Christ concerning the matter of personal expenditure? That is by no means an easy question to answer. Many Christians have no difficulty in answering it, for the simple reason that they have all they can do to supply their real necessities. But how much shall those of larger income spend upon themselves? Is it the will of Christ that his followers should live in fine houses,

fill them with elegant and luxurious furniture, adorn them with costly works of art, and keep a retinue of servants to care for them; that they should wear fashionable and expensive clothing, and bedeck themselves with jewels; that they should keep horses and carriages, give costly parties, fare sumptuously every day at their tables, and that they should indulge in travel for mere sight-seeing, and in other pleasures which the world calls innocent? It is not a question of what kind of a life is considered desirable from a worldly or social point of view; we are seeking to know the will of our Lord. It may not be easy to learn his will, but it certainly is not impossible. We must beware of dogmatic, off-hand judgments formed from narrow or one-sided views of the subject.

The consideration of some obvious facts may aid us in our interpretation. It should be remembered that personal expenditure is largely relative. One thousand dollars a year will keep a family in comfort in village or rural communities; the same sum in a city like New York would mean pinching poverty. We cannot estimate the luxury of living by its actual cost in money. People who get on very well in the country on a few hundreds a year consider the sums spent in their living by a rich city family as almost fabulous and wickedly extravagant. They are not prepared to judge because

they do not know all the conditions. Again, let us remember that luxury is largely a matter of degrees. In one sense, anything that goes beyond necessary provision for bare existence may be regarded as a luxury. A family can live in one room ; its members can sleep on straw beds spread on the floor ; they will not starve with bread and potatoes to eat ; one suit of clothes a year will cover one's nakedness if it is kept well mended. Is anything beyond such meagre provision forbidden because it will be a luxury? We cannot so interpret the teaching of Christ. For the mind and heart need provision as well as the body, and to some extent their improvement is dependent upon material surroundings. A heroic and beautiful life may be lived in squalid poverty ; but to live it in such circumstances is beyond the average Christian. A comfortable home, good sanitary conditions, some household decorations, wholesome food and proper clothing, books, magazines, and papers, opportunities for the young to be educated, and some social privileges, are necessities for the best kind of living. But beyond these, who shall fix the limit of expenditure? Only the Lord Jesus has the right to do it.

Again, one may have a fine home and all its appurtenances without intending to use them selfishly. A family may have more rooms and servants than

they care for, in order that they may exercise generous hospitality. They may adorn their homes with works of art, not alone to please their own eyes, nor yet for vain display, but to give pleasure to those to whom their doors are thrown open. And their guests for an evening or for months may be those who really need such entertainment. Many an invalid Christian, or broken-down minister, or returned missionary, has found a haven of rest in such a home. An evening in such a home has been a bright spot in the life of many a poor, hard-working person. Is expenditure for an elegant home to be used for such purposes forbidden by the law of Christ? We can hardly believe that it is. And yet if the purpose in making such a home were ninety-nine parts selfishness and one part love, as it might easily be, it would not meet with his approval.

Laying aside all prejudice, let us look at the words of Christ and of the Spirit. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, nothing is said against the moral character of the rich man. It is not asserted that he gained his wealth by fraud or oppression. A superficial examination might leave the impression that our Lord meant to condemn him simply because he was rich. "Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously [living in mirth and splen-

dor] every day. . . And the rich man died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." It is a brief sketch, but fearfully graphic. What was this man's offense? What had he done to condemn him to future torments? There is only one thing. His faring sumptuously, his living in mirth and splendor every day, while there was a beggar at his gate. And is it not a most graphic picture of the rich of our age, who spend their money in selfish indulgence and in vain display while thousands are in want, while millions struggle for a bare existence, and while the world perishes for the want of the gospel which could be carried to them by the surplus money of professing Christians? Surely the beggar is at our gate, and he wants more than food for his body, and professed disciples of Christ who "fare sumptuously every day" and disregard the beggar's needs, will hereafter find themselves in company with Dives. This we believe to be the proper application of the parable to the present age.

In that powerful arraignment of the rich from the pen of James, among the charges brought against them by the Spirit is this: "Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of 'slaughter.'" To those who live in this way he has already said, "Go

to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you." They will have their time for pleasure, as Dives had his, but their "day of slaughter" is already at hand. What a solemn warning to those who live "delicately" and take their "pleasure" while those who have made their wealth are suffering! It is a warning much needed by wealthy Christians who live in luxury.

When Paul was writing to the Christians at Corinth about offerings for their poor brethren at Jerusalem, he used these words: "For I say not this, that others may be eased, and ye distressed, but by equality; your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want" (supposing the conditions at some future time to be reversed); "that there may be equality: as it is written, He that gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack." The obvious thought of the Spirit here is that there shall be substantial equality of condition among Christians in their daily living. One is not to live in luxury while another lives in want. This "brotherly equalization" is not communism. Paul does not say that they must divide all their possessions until every one, both in Corinth and at Jerusalem, holds an equal amount of property; but that there should be for all an equal supply of their

wants. The superabundance of some is to meet the lack of others. And this law of brotherhood goes beyond the local church and includes the whole family of God's redeemed children. It is not socialism that is meant. The underlying principle of socialism is that every one shall be compelled to divide with every other; here the equalization is to be voluntary, prompted by love. It is a free gift from those who have; not the answer to a demand from those who have not. The apostle does not command them; he appeals to them by the example of Christ. He says, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." He feels that they ought not to need any other motive to induce them to equalize their supplies with their poorer brethren.

These three passages make it plain that it is utterly unchristian for some of the children of God to live in selfish luxury and worldly display while others are in want. But there are other reasons, deducible from the teaching of the New Testament, why Christians should live plainly and deny themselves in the matter of personal expenditure. It is required by the law of love. That law forbids us to use any possession for mere selfish gratification. Love has other and higher uses for what it controls.

Love in us means self-denial because our powers are limited. What we spend in selfish gratification we cannot use for the good of others. Love does not ask how much may I spend upon myself and how little can I give, but how little ought I to spend upon myself and how much can I give. And the example of our Lord enforces this. He became poor that he might make others rich. He never used his powers for selfish gratification. One who has any understanding of the life and character of our Lord, cannot imagine him living in our age, possessed of great wealth and spending it, or the income of it, in selfish luxury and worldly display. To think of him on earth living as many rich church-members live, as many pastors and church dignitaries live, would take away entirely his character as Saviour and pattern. By what right do we put ourselves above our Lord in the matter of self-indulgence? "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord"; why, then, should his followers pattern after the world?

In this connection it is worth while to notice a specious argument which has ensnared many wealthy Christians. They argue that when they spend money in luxurious living they are really doing good with it. If a rich man builds a splendid mansion for himself and his family those who gather the material and those who put up the

structure are benefited by the expenditure. When he buys furniture and works of art for his house, delicacies for his table, fine dresses and jewels for his wife and daughters, and ponies and boats and bicycles for his boys, he is scattering his money among manufacturers, farmers, and tradespeople, who really need it. The more servants he keeps, the larger the number of those who live upon his income. Christian ladies defend the immense amount of labor put upon their dress by arguing that it gives work to the poor. Is it not the truest charity to give work to those that need it?

From a worldly and business point of view this is a good argument. A man who sees only the material and present may in this way defend lavish expenditure on his living. We grant that so long as money is not used for indulgence in destructive vices, it is better to spend it than to hoard it. But let us look at this argument in the light of Christ's example and teaching. Why did he not go to work in that way to benefit the poor? Why did not he set up a great establishment at Jerusalem and hire a lot of servants to work for him instead of working at the carpenter's bench in Nazareth? The speciousness of the argument lies in the fact that as a rule such expenditure of money is purely selfish. It is used to defend a style of living already adopted from selfish motives. If the motive is to

give others work and scatter our money, why not employ them in labor that will benefit humanity and advance the cause of Christ? Instead of paying them to minister to our vanity and pride and carnal appetites, why not pay them to be missionaries, teachers, nurses, and ministering visitors to the destitute? The same number of persons could be employed and the rich would thus show that they were planning "to minister and not to be ministered unto," after the pattern of Christ. If it is objected that those whom the rich employ as servants are not fitted for higher work, the answer is, Take them while they are young and give them education and training which will fit them for it. Let the rich use their money to prepare first and then employ servants for Christ rather than for themselves if they would follow him.

The Christian law of personal expenditure as deduced from the words of the Master and from the principle of love is that we should spend upon ourselves only that which will make us better servants of the Lord. We may use for ourselves out of the Lord's money whatever is necessary to maintain our health and vigor, to improve our minds, and to develop our spiritual life. We may make for our families homes that will be comfortable and pleasant. We may clothe ourselves so that we shall not seem peculiar or be repulsive to others.

We may spend money to give our children pleasure and to educate them for life's duties. These are general principles beyond which a Christian cannot go. When we come to details of application, much must be left to the individual understanding of the Master's will. "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth." Two things, however, are perfectly clear.

First, the loyal disciple will not waste his Lord's money. He will not spend it for that which brings no good result. If the expenditure does not promote, directly or indirectly, the cause of Christ—if it does not make any one better or more useful—it is forbidden the Christian. As examples of such waste, we may mention the payment of money for tobacco by men and for many articles of personal adornment by women. Smoking costs a great deal of money. What conceivable good does it do? How does it promote the cause of Christ? How can this expenditure be brought under the law of love? The same unanswerable questions may be asked with regard to many articles of personal adornment for which Christian women pay vast sums of money. These are but examples of waste. Faithfulness as stewards would cut off many other kinds of personal expenditure.

Secondly, in view of the opportunities which Christians have to do good with their money, it

is impossible that those who would follow Christ should squander it in luxury and self-indulgence. The law of Christ is that need establishes a claim. Surely there is to-day great need of money in promoting Christian enterprises. Millions are without knowledge of the gospel of Christ, and millions more are without proper instruction in the way of life. All around us are people who need help of one kind or another—help which the money of Christians could give them. In view of these facts, how can loyal disciples of Christ spend large sums of money for their own pleasure, even though it be pleasure of a high order? The time may come when Christians can properly live in luxury, but that time is not yet. The needs of a lost world are too great. The calls for higher and nobler uses of money are too urgent.

3. *Hoarding.* This subject is properly treated in this connection, as hoarding is a form of self-gratification. We make a clear distinction between hoarding and accumulation of property. We have shown that the latter is justifiable; the former is always wrong. It is important just here “to give attention to definition.” Accumulation is the acquisition of property to be used as an instrument of beneficent power. At least two forms of it are consistent with loyalty to Christ. A Christian man may acquire money to be used as capital in his

business. He may make that business as large as possible, so long as he carries it on for the Lord and does not allow it to draw him away from personal Christian duties. Furthermore, he may make reasonable provision for his family and those dependent upon him. If he knows that his business will stop at his death, he may rightly invest money, the income of which will support them in that event. It is a Christian man's duty to provide for his family. "If any provideth not for his own, and specially for his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." What form that provision shall take must be left to the individual conscience and judgment in the circumstances. If he has reason to expect that a time will come when he can no longer be a producer, he may make suitable provision for his own old age. There is no word of Christ or of the Spirit which teaches us to plan for dependence upon others if we can avoid it.

What then is hoarding? It is laying up money beyond one's prospective needs. It is storing it for the mere sake of possession. It is amassing a fortune simply to gratify one's pride or sense of power. We can make it clear by examples. Suppose a man has already made provision for the probable needs of his family and for his own old age. His income from his business and his invest-

ments is ten thousand dollars a year. His living costs only half of that, and he does not care to put more capital into his business. What shall he do with the surplus? If he simply adds it, or any part of it, to his investments, he is guilty of hoarding. Suppose a Christian woman who has inherited from her parents or from her husband a fortune safely invested. The income from it is more than enough to supply her reasonable wants. What shall she do with the surplus income? If she adds it to her capital, she is guilty of hoarding. Why should she add anything to that which already more than supplies her needs?

This was the special sin of the rich fool. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there I will bestow all my corn and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" This man gains his riches not by fraud or oppression, not by scheming or trickery, but by the

blessing of God. They are the fruits of his ground. He has far more than he needs ; his ground remains and he may reasonably expect it to bring forth for his future wants ; what shall he do with the present surplus ? His final decision to hoard it no doubt met the approval of his neighbors, but it was that decision which made God call him a fool. He had opportunity to do good ; love would have prompted him to do it ; a spiritual sense would have shown him that he could lay up treasures in heaven. But he was selfish, worldly, and covetous, and so he hoarded his wealth. "So is every one that layeth up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God." Hoarding is the worst form of covetousness. It proceeds from the love of money for its own sake. It is mammon worship pure and simple.

Is it right for a Christian to lay up money for his children ? Yes ; within certain limits. It is right to provide for their education. It is right to give them a start in business or to set them up in housekeeping. If they are likely to be unable to care for themselves after the death of their parents, it is right to provide for their full support. But the history of rich families shows the utter folly of hoarding for children in order that they may inherit fortunes. Even in this world they are generally better off when they have to make their own

way. Unless they are converted and consecrated, their money is likely to be a curse to them. If the children are brought to Christ, trained in his service, and taught to give, it is safe to leave them large sums of money, but not otherwise. A Christian has no right to put the Master's property into the hands of those who will not use it for him, even though they are his own children. After reasonable provision is made for their wants, faithfulness in stewardship requires that the surplus be turned over directly to the Master.

4. *Charity.* We use this word to designate strictly benevolent uses of money. We protest against calling it charity to give money to the church or to Christian missions or to any strictly religious object. God is not a mendicant and his cause is not a begging cause. Charity is the relief of physical and temporal wants. It may go beyond the care of the body and give opportunities for recreation and mental improvement to those who cannot make such provision for themselves.

A large part of the New Testament is devoted to this subject. Both our Lord and the Holy Spirit have spoken upon it with great emphasis and frequent repetition. Of the passages quoted in the first chapter of this discussion, no less than fourteen directly enjoin gifts of charity. It will be well to repeat a few of the more striking. "Sell

that ye have and give alms." "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food let him do likewise." "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate," that is, willing to divide. The poor also are to give, for we read, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need." "In all things I gave you an example, how that so labouring we ought to help the weak." "But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?"

The prominence of this subject in the word is due to two causes. First, this practical charity was the best expression of that brotherhood which was to exist among Christians. It would be the visible evidence that they were heeding the command of Christ to love one another. It was a "new commandment," one that the world had not dreamed of, much less practised. In obeying it Christians would relieve suffering, enrich their own souls, and bear witness to the world that there is power

in Christ to save men from cruelty and selfishness.

Secondly, the prominence of charity over other forms of giving in the teachings of the word is due to the special needs growing out of social conditions in ancient times and unto this day in the East. In Palestine, and all over the Roman Empire, the dependent classes were very large. Sickness and widowhood and orphanage were common. The poorer classes were plundered by tax-gatherers, or robbed by marauding bands, or saw their property destroyed by war. The wages of laborers were scanty and a few days of enforced idleness meant positive want. In the early history of Christianity, a confession of faith in Christ often meant the loss of employment and sometimes the loss of all worldly goods. Local famines were not infrequent. The extent and degree of destitution in the best of times can scarcely be conceived by an inhabitant of this land of plenty and safety. In such conditions it was natural that the duty of caring for the poor, and especially the poor of the church, should be made very prominent. Such conditions do not exist among us and the demand for mere physical relief is relatively less. These facts must be borne in mind as we study the subject.

But Jesus said, "The poor ye have always with you," and we must try to understand and obey his

commands concerning what we shall do for them. Are we bound to obey literally such a command as, "Give to him that asketh thee?" To do so in many cases would be to violate the law of love. Suppose one asks for money in order that he may spend it upon his vices. If you know his purpose, it would certainly be wrong to give it to him. Suppose one asks for knife or poison with which to do some murderous deed. It would make you a participant in his crime to grant his request. Suppose one asks for food or clothing in order that he may live in idleness or vagabondage. To give to such a one is only to confirm him in his vicious habits. While doing him an apparent benefit it is really doing him a serious injury. Furthermore, it is contrary to the express teaching of the word, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." We must not sacrifice love to sentimentalism. We have no right to make and foster criminals by false charity. Our Heavenly Father does not give everything that is asked of him ; and it does not make us unlike him to refuse to give when we know the results will be evil. Refusing is often nobler charity than giving. The law of love requires that we should never give material goods to those whose moral character will be injured by our gifts. To whom and in what circumstances then shall we give? Persons who are willing to work are some-

times forced to be idle. They may be sick or there may be no work to be found. Low wages and heavy expenses in the past may have made it impossible for them to accumulate anything. Then they should be helped with gifts or loans or the provision of employment. There are vast numbers of dependent persons whose kindred cannot or will not provide for them. Such persons are orphaned children, the fatherless and widows, the children of drunkards and other vicious persons, the sick, and the aged and infirm who have no income. These are always objects of charity. How shall we exercise it? As I wish to confine the discussion to the use of money, we shall have to omit all consideration of the best form of charity, namely personal service, sympathy, counsel, and instruction.

Christians should remember that their brethren and sisters in the Lord have the first claim upon their charity. The churches must first care for their own destitute poor. "As we have opportunity let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith." It is "ministering to the saints" that Paul enjoins upon the Corinthian Christians. The niggardly way in which many rich churches care for their own poor is a reproach to Christianity. There ought to be a large "fel-

lowship fund" for this purpose in every church. And there will always be calls for private benefactions to our brethren and sisters in Christ. It is not mere clannishness or narrowness to provide first for our own, but a proper expression of Christian fellowship. A Christian in want on the other side of the world has a greater claim upon us than a worldling in want close at hand. A second reason for this is that worldlings would be likely to abuse our charity. A third reason is that in nominally Christian lands the world makes some provision for its own poor. Christians who have property are taxed with other citizens for this purpose. If in addition to that they care well for needy members of their churches, it may be questioned whether any more ought to be expected of them. It is certain that if needy Christians were properly supported by their churches it would be an exhibition of brotherhood that would have great power with the world and would go far to remove prejudices against the churches which are now so bitter among poor people.

But we cannot limit our charity to church-members. While they have the first claim, we must commend the gospel of Christ by doing good to all men as we have opportunity. At the same time, we must beware of mere "humanitarianism." We must not let it be supposed that the main pur-

pose of Christianity is to supply physical needs. We must not spend our resources in caring for the bodies of the lost so that we shall have nothing left with which to care for their souls. How much of his income a Christian ought to spend in charity and what forms his charity shall take must depend upon circumstances and upon the leadings of the Spirit. The forms of charity in our age are so many and so varied that we cannot attempt here to name or describe them. Immediate physical necessities brought to our knowledge must always be supplied. If the need is among our own brethren, it is impossible to evade or shirk the duty without guilt. If it is among others, every Christian must judge of his share of the responsibility. The extent of it will depend upon his ability and upon other claims on his property. It is a beautiful charity to take homeless children and make them our own and care for them in our homes. It is a charity which will certainly win the approval of Him who took little children in his arms and blessed them. The homes of childless Christians whose means will allow it ought to be filled with homeless children. It is as good for the adopting parents as it is for the adopted children. The establishment and maintenance of orphanages, homes for children, and free kindergartens, of hospitals and dispensaries, of public libraries, free reading rooms,

lecture halls and pleasant places of resort for the people, are noble forms of charity. The employment of physicians and nurses for the poor when they are sick in their own homes, and of persons to teach their children how to do manual work, is often a good use of money. In cities there is a demand for the erection of good tenements which may be rented to the poor on terms within their reach. The establishment of a fund to be placed in the hands of trustees from which in an emergency the poor could borrow without interest but on reasonable security, would do much to relieve the distress into which even the industrious and frugal may fall at times. In these and in many other ways can Christians of wealth exercise charity. How much better to use the Lord's money for such purposes than to spend it in selfish indulgence and luxury! Can any one doubt which form of expenditure will win the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant," when the Master returns for the great reckoning?

5. *Religious purposes.* Suppose a Christian has performed the sacred and important duty of consecrating himself and his property to the Lord; what portion of his income shall he devote to religious purposes? The obligation to devote some portion of it to such purposes is unmistakable.

Upon the people of God rests the responsibility

of maintaining public worship. This duty was imposed upon the Hebrews, was transferred to Christians, and has never been questioned by the great mass of God's people. It is the divine law that Christians shall support pastors and preachers. "Know ye not that they which minister about sacred things eat of the things of the temple, and they which wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar? Even so did the Lord ordain that they which proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel." It was in connection with preaching that Jesus said, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in teaching. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his hire."

The obligation to send the gospel to all the world is laid upon Christians. When Jesus said, as his final command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," or as Matthew reports it, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I

have commanded you," he did not mean that the apostles alone were to do it. It is an obligation which rests equally upon every Christian until the work is completed. The work of evangelizing the world is dependent upon the gifts of Christians. Those who go to proclaim the gospel must be supported. As a rule it is utterly impracticable for them to earn their own living while they preach Christ and teach their converts the principles of the Christian life. The churches are called to support those who are called of God to be evangelists and missionaries. We need have no difficulty about knowing the will of the Lord in this matter, for he has spoken with extraordinary plainness. No command that he ever gave is more explicit, universal, and imperative.

If we are Christians we are like Christ. The very name implies a resemblance. We have not only taken him for our pattern; he is our life and we are growing into his likeness by virtue of his presence in us. Now the regnant principle or motive of his life was love for the lost. It was that motive which brought him into the world as the first missionary. His love went out to the needy and induced him to give himself for them. He taught us the great, divine law that need establishes a claim. The greatest need of humanity is that redemption from sin of which they learn in the

gospel. Paul recognized this obligation when he said, "I am debtor both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." He would give all there was in him to this work in the hope that he might pay his debt. Any one who would be like Christ, any one who has a quickened sense of the world's greatest need, must feel deeply impressed with his duty to do all he can to save the perishing. No obligation of brotherhood or of charity presses upon Christians with such weight as this obligation to send the gospel to the lost. What we give to evangelize the world measures our sense of this obligation.

Again, large gifts to this cause which is so dear to the heart of Christ may serve to express our gratitude to him. He said, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Our redemption from sin and death, our present peace and joy and strength, our hope of being glorified, all that we are and all that we expect to be, we owe to him who died for our sins, who rose for our justification, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us. There is only one way in which we can pay this debt of gratitude. We can do nothing for Christ in his own person. He has passed beyond the reach of our poor ministrations. But we can pay him by saving

those he died to save. His last order was that we are to pay the debt we owe him to those who need salvation. If we do not obey, it will show that we are too ungrateful to recognize the greatest possible cause of gratitude. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my word." Our gifts to carry on his work will be the measure of our love for him. He wants our love, he deserves it, he has earned it.

It is evidently the will of the Master that a large proportion of our income should be devoted to religious purposes. Have we any rule by which to determine how large a portion? Can we know the mind of the Master in this respect?

The Jew was expected to give one-tenth of his income for the support of the temple worship and the maintenance of the priests. Beyond that the devout Jew made special offerings to the Lord. He knew nothing of "foreign missions," or missions of any kind, and felt no obligation to give the Gentile nations knowledge of the true God. With our greater reasons for gratitude and our stronger obligations, a Christian ought to do as well as a Jew, and if he can find no higher law, devote at least one-tenth of his income to strictly religious purposes. But we find no proof that this is the law for Christians. Our Lord gave no definite instructions in the matter. The gifts which he commanded or approved were not based on this rule,

but went far beyond it. The rich young ruler he commanded to give all that he had. Zaccheus he approved for giving half his goods. He defended Mary in her act of pouring out upon him the precious ointment worth at that time from three hundred to five hundred dollars of our money. His highest praise was given to a poor widow who gave to the Lord all that she had, "even all her living." Surely here is no law of tenths, but a higher law, the law of love.

It can easily be shown that the two laws are not consistent with each other. The principles we have discovered in the word relating to consecration and to personal expenditure show that what we keep and spend upon ourselves or hoard up, is a better measure of our love for Christ than what we give to him. The poor widow kept nothing for herself, and our Lord immortalized her as the greatest of givers.

Let us look at the law of tenths from this point of view. Here are two Christians, one of whom has an income of ten thousand dollars a year, and the other of one thousand. We will suppose that each has about the same calls for personal expenditure. Apply to them the law of tenths, and the former will give to religious purposes one thousand dollars a year, and keep for himself nine thousand; the latter will give one hundred and keep nine

hundred. It is a law which allows to one ten times as much out of the Lord's money as it allows to the other for personal expenditure or for hoarding. Does the Master deal thus with his stewards? It is a law which requires no self-sacrifice of one and great self-sacrifice of the other. The man with ten thousand dollars a year can give one-half of it to religious purposes and still be five times better off than his poorer brother. If we look upon gifts to the Lord as a tax, we must fix upon a percentage; but God is not a tax gatherer; he receives offerings of love.

A Christian may be placed in circumstances such that it is not the will of the Master that one-tenth of his income should be used for strictly religious purposes. The demands of his family, or of other dependents, may be such for a time that the Lord will tell him to use all his money for them. He may make his offerings to the Lord on the altar of such benefactions as well as on the altar of religious service. But after the special stress is past a loving and devout heart will find a way to devote something to the extension of the kingdom in the world.

The Christian rule of giving, as laid down by the Spirit, is that each one is to give "as he may prosper." Giving is to be according to ability. Every Christian who has an income should devote some fixed portion of it to religious purposes. This

giving should not be left to impulse or caprice. The ordinary haphazard giving is dishonoring to God. Many professing Christians treat God as they do their dogs and cats ; they give to his service what may be left over after their own wants are all supplied. The true way to give is first to recognize the fact that we and our property belong to God. Then, deliberately, prayerfully, considering all the claims upon us, and seeking especially to know the will of the Master, we should decide what portion of our income ought to be used for religious purposes. For one Christian it may be one-tenth, and those cases are rare in which it should be less ; for another it may be one-fifth, and for another one-half. As a rule the larger the income the larger the proportion which should be devoted to religious purposes. Those rich church-members who reverse this rule show that they need to be converted from self to Christ. And those poor Christians—poor in every sense of the word—who will give nothing because they cannot give much, need to learn some lessons of humility and love.

What shall those Christians do who have no income which they can call their own? Such are married women who have no independent property, and children who are wholly supported by their parents. If possible let them get a stated allow-

ance for their personal expenses, and set aside a portion of that for the Lord's work. In some cases they can earn money, all of which can go to the Lord, since their support is provided for by husband or parents. What shall they do whose income is irregular and uncertain? Such are professional men, who live on fees, and laboring people who work as they have employment. Certainly they cannot make pledges far in advance as to what they will do for different objects, but they can obey literally the apostolic injunction to put aside every week a certain amount for the Lord as they have been prospered. Many persons cannot tell in advance what a year's income will be, but after a few years of experience they can strike an average, and make their division from that. And always it should be the gross income that is reckoned, not the profits, or the income after one's living has been deducted from it.

We repeat that it is important to devote a fixed portion of the income to religious purposes. Our love for the Lord is fickle, and if we leave this matter to impulse, before we are aware of it selfishness will have control and we shall be spending the Lord's money on ourselves. And the money devoted to this purpose should be set aside. It should be put in a box, or bag, or drawer by itself, or kept in a separate bank account. Let every man

who has a bank account try this plan. Suppose your name is John Howard. Then the money you intend to use in your business or for living expenses you will deposit in your own name. But the money devoted to religious purposes you will deposit to the credit of John Howard, steward, and as you draw it for church or missions or any form of religious work, you will sign your checks in that way. But whether the money is thus put aside or not, we ought to keep a careful account of what we give to the Lord. We are apt to deceive ourselves and think we are very liberal because now and then we put in the collection a dollar for missions or for charity, when if we added up what we have given in the course of a year, we would find it pitifully small compared with what we have spent needlessly on ourselves. An account book would show many a Christian how little he loves the Lord, and how much he loves himself.

Having decided on the portion of the income to be used for religious purposes, the next thing is to divide it among the different objects which may properly be regarded as belonging to the agencies for the extension of Christ's kingdom among men. Some of them are our own church, foreign missions, home missions, State missions, city missions, the printing and distribution of Bibles, tracts, and religious books, and Christian education. The

relative amount to be given to each must be determined by circumstances. A member of a large and wealthy church, with its building and equipment all provided, should give more for missions than for the support of his own church. A small and poor church might have the first claim upon the gifts of its members. In every case it should be remembered that all our property is to be used for the extension and upbuilding of Christ' kingdom on the earth and that the larger gifts should go where there is the greater need. Of course it requires some measure of intelligence to make a proper distribution of our gifts. A Christian should inform himself with regard to these different agencies and their relative claims. If he is not able to do that let him consult his pastor or some other well-informed person and obtain advice. We must not expect to be miraculously guided until we have exhausted the natural means of gaining information.

Having consecrated all our property to God and devoted a certain portion of it to religious purposes, our giving will gain those qualities which will make it acceptable to him. It will be a personal transaction with Christ. We shall give "as unto the Lord." It will be cheerful. We shall give "not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." The word here trans-

lated "cheerful" means hilarious or joyous, and nothing can make giving a joy except the sense that it is "unto the Lord" who hath redeemed us, and "whose we are and whom we serve." It will be liberal. The consciousness that we are stewards and that the Lord has simply put property into our hands to be administered for him will go far to cure selfishness and cause us to use a large portion of it for his work. We shall do this not through slavish fear but because we love him and feel honored by the fact that he has entrusted us with his property. We take pride in being faithful to an earthly master or employer for the sake of loyalty alone; we can be faithful to Christ for the sake of love and loyalty. We can make giving an act of worship, if we remember that we are offering that to him which is his own. The kind of giving which makes God a mendicant, dishonors him before the world and degrades him in our thought. It is only when we recognize his universal ownership that giving becomes an act of worship.

This method of using the property which the Lord commits to us will have most blessed results and rewards. It would be a pleasure to dwell upon them at length, but space can be spared only for brief mention of a few of them.

1. It will shut off all illegitimate means of gaining wealth. No one can be dishonest, or oppressive,

or greedy for gain, while he is doing business for the Lord. It will be a safeguard against all those dangers to which "they that will be rich" are exposed. It will sanctify and uplift secular business, and give every one engaged in it a sense that he has "a high calling."

2. It will fill our souls with joy and peace and comfort. God will come to us in our daily walk and we shall never be without a sense of the Divine presence. Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The Spirit said, "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." Nothing drives God from us like devotion to money. But if we consecrate all to him he will abide with us and bless us. He will guide us in the right way and keep us in his blessed fellowship.

3. This treatment of property will make us "rich toward God." By consecrating our property to him and giving largely of it for his work we can transmute it into holy character. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom." Thus our Lord heaps up phrases to show the great and blessed rewards of giving. The Spirit speaks of it as a kind of spiritual seed-sowing. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also

sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. . . And God is able to make all grace abound towards you ; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." True giving is an exercise of self-denial, of love, of faith, and these graces grow by exercise. The more we give the more like Christ we shall become.

4. This kind of giving is laying up treasure in heaven. Jesus said, "Make to yourselves friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail they may receive you into eternal tabernacles." He meant that we are so to use our property that when it is no longer possible for us to hold any we shall have riches in heaven. His command shows that it is possible. The souls our money has been instrumental in saving will be there to make heaven glorious for us. The poor saints whose distress we have relieved will be there to thank and love us. Our Lord will reward us for what we have done for his people exactly as though we had done it for him. The increased capacity for enjoyment which service has here given will enable us to appreciate heaven. Cross-bearing with Christ in this life will fit us for crown-wearing with Christ in the life to come. The only money saved is that which is given to the Lord. He is a safe banker. What we "save" we must lose at

death; what we have given to Christ we shall find again increased a thousand-fold and transmuted by the alchemy of the sanctifying Spirit into spiritual gold and silver for our eternal enrichment.





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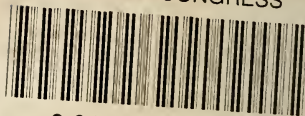
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